

OCTOBER 1931

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



OFFICIAL ORGAN HAPPY HOURS BROTHERHOOD

## GOLDEN ARGOSY

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1886, by Frank A. Munsey, in the name of the Literary Publishing Company, at Washington, D.C.

Vol. VI. No. 52. FRANK A. MUNSEY, PUBLISHER. NEW YORK, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1888. Whole No. 312.



DRAWN BY J. SHEPPARD BROWN.

THE GREAT BLACK LION AS HE STOOD OVER THE PROSTRATE FORM OF THE KAFFIR CHIEFTAIN, LIFTED ONE PAW MENACINGLY, AND GLARED AT THE HUNTER WITH TERRIBLE FURY.

One story "THE KAFFIR CHIEFTAIN," by Frank H. Converse, on next page.

A FAMOUS OLD-TIME BOYS' PAPER

FRONT COVER OF THE LAST NUMBER OF THE GOLDEN ARGOSY

THE LAST NUMBER OF *THE GOLDEN ARGOSY*

BY FRED T. SINGLETON

Frank A. Munsey's sterling weekly for young Americans, *The Golden Argosy*, was the outstanding development of the 1880's in boys' story papers. Launched in 1882, it did not at first compete with *The Boys of New York*, *Young Men of America* and *Beadle's Weekly*, which got their start a decade earlier. There was not so much news-stand "flash" to *The Golden Argosy*. In this special field, the two Frank Tousey papers had no serious competition at this time. *Beadle's Weekly*, started in 1870, was losing out to the two Tousey publications in the early 1880's. *Harrigan's and Hart's* (afterwards *Dick and Stecher's*) *New York Boys*, *Leon Leroy's New York Boys* and *The Boys' Champion* were all launched at the beginning of the decade, modeled after *The Boys of New York*. Scrambling for some of that paper's big news-stand circulation, they all surrendered the field to Tousey after short runs. Tousey was to endure for fifty years.

*The Golden Argosy* was more in the "family circle" class with *The Youth's Companion* and *Golden Days*, although much more spirited than the former and with only eight pages instead of the sixteen of the latter. All three of these weeklies were about the same over-all page size, the new Munsey sheet being  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide by  $16\frac{1}{4}$  inches high. The weekly *Harper's Young People* and the monthly *St. Nicholas* were also in the same "quality" group, but they were for the younger boys and girls. The Elverson paper, *Golden Days*, launched in 1879, was riding the crest of its merited popularity in the early 1880's, and undoubtedly had great influence with Munsey. It is plain that the magic of the word "golden" cast its spell over the new-fledged publisher, but he was unable at the start to match the bulk of the sixteen pages of his model. However, he fixed his subscription rate at \$1.75 a year against the \$3.00 a year asked by *Golden Days*. The Elverson weekly had a good news-stand sale at six cents a copy, and Munsey set out to build up a direct-by-mail circulation rather than to depend entirely on news-stand sales at five cents a copy.

"Freighted with Treasures for Boys and Girls" was the alluring subtitle which the publisher tacked on to number one of his paper, dated December 9, 1882. "Do and Dare, or a Brave Boy's Fight for Fame and Fortune," by Horatio Alger, Jr., was the first-class serial featured in the first number. This title might have been chosen by the publisher a few years later for the title of his own story, for he had to fight for the life of his paper every inch of the way. "I had four thousand dollars in prospect and forty dollars in cash," said Munsey, twenty-five years later, "one room for an office, an eight-dollar table, two wooden chairs and an ink-bottle. My plans had all gone wrong, and I was lucky to find, at last, a publisher who agreed to bring it out and retain me as editor and manager." Five months later he was office boy and chief contributor as well.

The ebb and flow of the paper's fame and fortune is reflected in its pages from week to week, and it is interesting to watch this through the complete run of six years, a fine set of bound volumes of which I have recently had the pleasure of examining. The second year, 1883, was a hard one to pull through, judging from the indifferent draftsmanship in the illustrations and the small size of the engravings, although the high character of the serials was maintained. It is remarkable how the publisher ever did manage to hold Horatio Alger, Jr., Oliver Optic and his other star writers together and to keep the paper going. But he did manage it, and his courage and perseverance were rewarded in later years. He died many times a millionaire.

An aggressive and well-planned advertising campaign for subscriptions, conducted about this time in other periodicals reaching the home, furnished ready funds through 1884 and into 1885. But another low spot shows up in the run for the winter of 1885-1886. Many old electrotypes of irrelevant woodcuts appear in the pages at this time, and few of the serials are adequately illustrated. But with the issue for March 13, 1886, the first instalment of "Afloat in a Great City," the corking serial which Munsey himself wrote, was flashed on the front page. His first story, "Fred Worthington's Campaign," had run through the paper the previous summer, but apparently did not get over like this second story. "Afloat in a Great City" had power and strength, for the paper picked up immediately in illustrations and special features. You can sense the money for subscriptions and from news-stand sales coming in the front door as you turn over the pages of the run at this period. On October 2, 1886, appeared the first big "smash" front page illustration, the first the paper ever had, and, finally, a few weeks later, on November 27, 1886, appeared the grand announcement that with the next number the paper would go to sixteen pages.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

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## WHEN DIME NOVELS WERE IN THEIR GLORY

BY RALPH F. CUMMINGS

Dime novels were in their glory long before I began to read them—long before I knew what they were. I was well along in my 'teens before I ever heard of a dime novel or nickel library. I started to read them long after the nickel libraries had disappeared from the news-stands.

Naturally, I do not get the same "kick" from them that the old boys did in their boyhood days. But I sure like 'em just the same, no matter if I did come along after most of the old-timers were gone.

The famous little dime novels in the yellow-red covers were in their glory from 1860 to 1875, the nickel library succeeding to them in popularity. The firm of Beadle & Adams sponsored the dime novel, and built a great publishing business through the sale of hundreds of thousands of them.

Enterprising men who worked for Beadle and Adams left their jobs to launch publishing schemes of their own, and the 1870's saw a tremendous expansion of cheap publications of all kinds.

But this was all many years before my time. The first novels I ever saw were in the nickel library serials with colored covers, known as *Pluck and Luck*, *Wild West*, *Secret Service*, *Work and Win* and *Liberty Boys of '76*, which came along at the turn of the century. So you see I was a little late for the dime novels of tradition, but I love them just the same.

I have only one of the real old-time dime novels by me at present. It is one of Col. Prentiss Ingraham's snappy tales, "Captain of Captains, or The Broom of the Seas." Ingraham wrote more than six hundred novels, all exciting, full of incident and innocence, and scrupulously devoted to the popular doctrines of poetic justice." It was their "rough abundance of invention" that put his stories over as popular literature.

"The Captain of Captains" was Rupert Meredith, commander and owner of the noble bark, "Adventurer." He sailed from Boston one bright spring morn in the early nineteenth century for the far away coast of Spain, and ran into all kinds of strange adventures.

The woodcut on the cover of this little pamphlet shows a bold sea rover clasping a little boy in one arm and holding a sword with the other. He looks like he wanted a fight, and there were plenty of them for him in the story, as it turned out.

"Captain of Captains" was published in 1873, twenty-five years before I was admitted to this world. In the back of the novel is a list of 290 titles of *Beadle's Dime Novels*, a complete list from No. 1 with authors' names.

I greatly prize this little book. If Beadle and Adams should "come back" with their dime novels, what a good time we would all have!

—o:—

### SELECTIONS FROM "THE LIFE OF PETER PAD"

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

A FRANK TOUSEY DIME BOOK OF THE EARLY EIGHTEEN-EIGHTIES

PART TWO

At the appointed day, with palpitating heart, I went to his sanctum. He recognized me at a glance and proceeded to frown. Then he handed my sketch back to me.

"No, sir, it will not do. Stick to writing wrappers; you'll never get above it," he said, sharply.

"Thank you. But has the piece no merit?" I ventured to ask.

"None in the least, unless it might possibly please triflers and people who like to laugh."

"But don't people like to laugh?"

"No, sir, and so far as this paper is concerned, such balderdash will not be encouraged."

The paper died of gravity two months after.

I felt somewhat bluffed, but had gained one point, nevertheless.

Even that old fossil said that it would make people laugh, and so I tried another paper and sold the sketch at once.

About that time *The Boys of New York* was started, at that time the largest and best boys' paper in the world, as it is to this day.

Since selling my first sketch, I had written several chapters of the life of Tommy Bounce, and with some little confidence I took them to the publisher, with what result nearly every boy in the country knows, having read the adventures of Mischievous Tommy, the first story of its kind ever published.

I shall never forget Tommy Bounce, for he was a good friend of mine, and introduced me to a larger number of fun loving boys than almost any other author knows, and at the same time his merry mug drove the wolf so far away that I hope he will never even take a look at me again.

And then came the famous "Shorty," who is known to everybody the land over, and as a comic biography, it has proved to be the greatest hit ever made in a story paper, for which "Shorty" has my best thanks.

And Shorty made a fortune out of it, as well, for it brought him before the public in a brand new light, and whenever he was "billed" in a town, the readers of *The Boys of New York* were sure to rally and fill the house. In truth, I only wish it had benefitted me half as much as it has Shorty, for he has now retired, and is living on the fat of the land.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

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### JONNIE JONES' DIARY

#### PART FIVE

Cum home soon after, and started readin a story in *Happy Days* called "Young Darrel, or The Mystery of the A. B. C.," writ by Old King Brady. Old King Brady is a detective two, and a humdinger. He used to chase Jussie James and try to captur him, but Jussie most alwus gut away.

JULY 11—It rained agin today, and I went over to Jim Black's hous to play. Jims maw told us to go up in the attic and play, and get out under her feet.

Jim had a swing, a trapise and sum dum bels and boxin gluvs up there. He calls it his jim-naze-e-um, whutever that is. I fel off the trapise and bluded my noze, and then Jim wunted me to try the boxin gluvs, and we did. Jim hit me an naful belt in the mowth and loosened up all my frunt teeth, and this made me mad and I up and kicked him a humdinger in the bred baskit. He was awful sick for a minit or two, but when he got so he cud speak, he sez, "Nobuddy but a coward wud kick a feller in the stum-muck, and anyhow that's no way ter fite."

"Fite!" sez I, "Wuz we fitin? I thort we wuz only playin! And any-

how Jim Black, I can lick you the best day you ever saw, and if you don't believe it, take those pesky pillers off your hands and we will go at it man fashun." "No," sez Jim, "I don't want to fite today." Funny how sum fellers change their mind so quick.

So we made up and looked around for suthin else to do. I spied a big trunk way over under the eves all covered with dust and cobwebs. I arsked Jim whut wuz in it, but he didn't no so we opened it up. And gee! what a find we made.

The old trunk wuz half full of old novuls. Beaduls Dime Novuls, Frank Stars American Novuls, DeeWits Claud Duval Novuls, On Ems Injun Novuls, Campfires, Gems, Littul Cheefs, War Librurys and lots of others.

We went down stairs and asked Missus Black whose novuls they wuz, and she sed that they used to belong to Jims paw when he wuz a boy. And she sed that Jim and I cud hav them if we wished. Gosh! whut a find. We went back up attic and red all the afternoon. I red one called "Seth Jones," and Jim red a Littul Cheef called "The Loggers Cabin." They wuz dandy stories. Jim helped me lug my harf home and I gess we had about a hundred a peece. Paw grabbed about a dozen of them soon as he seen them. Gess he will want to reed them all.

JULY 20—Gut sum more Golden Hours today. Am reedin a story called "Pawney Bil, the Hero Scout of Oklahomer, or Wild Adventures in the Wild West." Writ by Cap. Ralf Bone Hill. "Pawney" is a dandy, bout as good as Buflo Bil. These Golden Hours hav sum great stories, "Remember the Maine," "On to Havannah," Uncle Sams Advance Agent," "The Hidden Ilund," etc.

AUG. 2—My goat Billy et up harf ov maws washin off the line, so she sed I wud have to get rid of him.

Traded him to Gus Smith fur his houn dog, Bob, and gut a bunch of novuls to boot.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

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### GILBERT PATTEN WRITES IN

Gilbert Patten is still on deck, boys. He is doing fine, but is very busy, and says if there is any delay in answering letters it is due to press of work. He sends best wishes to members of Happy Hours Brotherhood.

—:o:—

### WARNING TO H. H. B. MEMBERS

Beware of Earl Farmer, of Lincolnton, N. C. Do not loan this chap any novels, as he borrows them and then sells them as his own.

—:o:—

### PARTIAL LIST OF 1931 MEMBERS OF H. H. B.

No. 55—Ralph F. Adimare, 765 Sixth Ave., New York, N. Y.

## CHECK LIST OF POPULAR AMERICAN NOVELS

ITEM No. 10—*The Champion Library.* Size, 8½ by 11½; three cols. to page; 16 pages; black and white. Published in 1882 by Champion Pub. Co., 22-24 North William Street, New York. Five cents copy. Nice illustrations on cover. An interesting weekly containing good stories. Some of the titles: No. 1, "Tiger Heart, the Boy Chief of the Seminoles," by Zach Brewster; No. 5, "Capt. Crossbones, the Terror of the Seas," by Rab Rithlin; No. 21, "Dashing Nell, the Female Road-agent of the Blackhills."

IMMEDIATE WANTS of JAMES MADISON, 465 S. Detroit St., Los Angeles, Calif. Golden Hours, Vol. 1, Nos. 1 to 18 inc. Vol. 2, Nos. 30 and 50. Vol. 3, No. 72.

Young Men of America, Nos. 598 and 634. Complete set of Beadle's Baseball Guides. 100 consecutive numbers "Good News," published in the 90's by Street & Smith.

Magnet Library. Medal Library. Columbia Library. Young Men of Great Britain, Nos. 103 and 104.

## I HAVE FOR EXCHANGE

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Half Dime Library,  
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Large file Happy Days,  
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Route 1, Box 55

GRAFTON, MASS.

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Forms close the 10th of month  
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12, 19, 24, 25 (Ivers) - 60c each.

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Route 1, Box 55  
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**WANTED**

Cavalier, Norfolk, Va.,  
Seven Arts Magazine,  
Balzac Library, daily,  
M'lle New York,  
Bacon Library, 1900,

Maggie, by Johnston Smith,  
On Going to Church, 1896,  
Monsieur Beaucaire, Apr., 1900,  
Philistine, Oct., 1896, Jan., 1897.  
Kipling, Gypsy Trail,  
Crane, Red Badge, 1895,  
Last Words, 1902.

**BOOK EXCHANGE**

Station A.

Toledo, Ohio.